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Open letter to the People of the United States

by

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Berlin-Charlottenburg 1

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Putbus, Rügen.

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The Experts of the Powers have met in conference to establish uninterrupted peace between the former Entente and Germany and to decide upon the future of the German people.

Anxiously and hopefully, the German people will wait during the next few weeks as upon the resolutions of the conference does the future evolution of Germany depend. It is generally taken that the decisions will be greatly influenced by America and the conviction reigns that a possible and permanent order of relations can be introduced only by America.

The problem is at present a purely financial one. The other powers cannot solve it because they are dependent on America and would be even more dependent if Germany did not pay them.

America is rich as it never before was. It is in a position therefore to put the complicated situation in Europe, nay of the whole world, again on a supportable basis. It is only necessary to put Germany again in a free and independent position as before, in order to enable her to establish a moderating, balancing influence on her neighbours in Europe and the whole world. Americans were never threatened, never suffered from the German side. Its present condition is also such that no fears need be entertained from Germany.

Germany can only be helped if she is put on a financial condition which enables her to free herself from financial burdens, reacquiring her political and financial independence.

There are no two opinions on this point. And also on the fact that help can come only from America.

The question however is: What can America do to sacrifice something for the stabilisation of relations in Europe — even if it is only a small sacrifice, that of a financial nature?

Is America bound to take active part in the coming of changes and new order? Is America justified to speak and do something special for Germany?

The answers to these questions may be given in the form of the following questions: —

Is it true that in the Treaty of Versailles the Armistice agreement of November 5th, 1918, is not mentioned and is left specially unconsidered? The Armistice and the 14 points of President Wilson have moved the German people and that alone has made possible what the Versailles Treaty of Peace has brought — for without that nothing could have taken place. It changed the state-form, it gave up resistance and as a consequence the army marched home from its defensive positions, laid down its arms and divested itself of warlike intentions — all due to faith in the promises of President Wilson for a peace acceptable and agreeable, for which all nations longed. It was a promise of peace whose fulfilment was bound up indissolubly with honor of the American President and the American people.

There was no limit to the trust placed in the hopes of Wilson's peace intentions and in the wise decisions which he, as arbitrator of the world, should make. What has come out of it? All binding agreements were broken; the horrified and defenceless German people were dictated the peace treaty. Never was a people's trustfulness so disdainfully betrayed. The history of past millenniums does not show such an instance where a treaty was signed without amendment; there was no fear of the former enemy taking up arms and therefore it was denied and turned into the opposite to the damage and slavery of a 60 million nation.

The instrument of peace dictated in Versailles is juridically null and void. About what it is morally and humanly, everyone has his own opinion. It is the biggest hoax known in history. That it was at all possible to enforce is due to the fact that the fundamentally moral English and American peoples were dinned into ears again and again with the monstrous propaganda that Germany was specially responsible for war, a statement that is long since recognised in these two countries as a lie.

Is it true that when President Wilson entered upon his voyage on December 4th on board "George Washington" he telegraphed to his country as follows: —

"The President goes to Europe to represent the ideals of Americans and to struggle for his 14 points."

What has come out of the weakness shown by the President Wilson as the official representative of the American people?

Is it true that other members of the American Peace Delegation in Paris held obstinately to the validity of the Armistice Treaty till the end? For example, the American Judge John Foster Dolles declared even on February 19th, 1919: "We have before us no unwritten paper upon which we can scrawl what we want. The paper before us has the signatures of Wilson, Orlando, Clemenceau and Lloyd George in black and white" (retranslated).

Is it true that the names of these best known representatives of the Entente have subscribed their agreement in the Allies' note with the conditions of peace — conclusions demanded by Wilson? That in the answer to Germany's 4th note of 23 October, Secretary of State Lansing informed the German Government under 5th November that America and her allies have agreed to accept the well-known conditions of Peace demanded by Wilson, of which the only burdens to be placed upon German people were to be the repair of damages caused on land, water, and air?

That is all true, and therefore it is understandable that when they simply set aside all these in Versailles a man so well known and belonging to the Anglo-Saxon race as Prof. Keynes described the action of the Allies as "dishonourable, a very deep-going dishonesty, a manner of action upon which none can think without a sense of shame" (retranslated).

Even Wilson upon his return to U.S.A. considered it necessary to keep up appearances and sent to the rest of the American delegation in Paris which was indignant at this turn the following dispatch: Withdraw, if necessary completely break with the procedure which is incompatible with what we, in full conscience, offered to the enemy which we, in all honor, cannot any more change.

It is well known, that this withdrawal took the form that America refused to ratify the Peace Treaty of Versailles.

Practically this non-ratification of the great instrument of deception forged in Versailles had so little effect, that thereby not a little of the horrible burdens imposed upon any of the defeated countries has been remitted.

Dr. Ritter of Gratz is right when he writes: None can deny the clear fact in history that the American Union is morally responsible and remains, for the execution of the Armistice of 5th November 1918 which it transmitted to both parties as their Trustee and by their signatures recognised as sovereign states.

We may be excused if we bring all these facts clearly to the notice of American people without flinching. Clearness is an imperative necessity. America must know what the world thinks about her action. Great things are in the balance, not only for us but also for America.

What has been done in Versailles remains indelibly in history, for centuries, for millenniums. There is yet time to exert influence on it, as to whether it should be left to posterity as a mark of shame for the present and for the future or whether to be regretted as an aberration caused by excitement and passion of the poison let loose by war but which should be corrected and repaired in the wake of peace and reflection following it.

For us in Germany, it is a question whether through breach of trust and through treachery, we should be given over for generations to dependence and to slavery or whether in faithfulness and belief, truth and justice before all the world the fulfilment of promises given in full public will be made good. Whether the American people will get back its honor and we our freedom, is in the balance.

The responsibility for both these lies with the American people alone and singly.

American people are at bottom honorable, moral, religious, and sensitive in point of honesty. We appeal to all these instincts. We do not doubt that, if the Americans are made sufficiently clear about the real condition of things, so that they will be made to think independently, they will come

to the view that it is their duty to rectify the error into justice by enforcing the promises made at that time.

Well and good, we appeal to all that is good and noble in the core of Americans. May they respond to our desperate appeal. The matter is in American hands.

All that has been said here is nothing but truth. Hence we say: You Americans, being again on friendly footing with us — give us our rights! Give us what has been promised! Let us have peace without vindictiveness, without punishment, as we hoped for and deserved from you. We only want what you through President Wilson have solemnly promised, subscribed to and recognised in the Armistice agreement. By doing so, you will dispel the darkness spread over the eyes of men before right and virtue, and the light of truth, good and noble in mankind will triumph in men's eyes. You can achieve all this by exalted action in the consciousness of self-knowledge, of regret and a new resolution and you will thereby introduce the necessary ideal, you who strive for the rehabilitation of Man and the world — ideals which have been trampled upon before the altar of Civilisation and Humanity as in confused giddiness in the savage days.

Such is the appeal of the Germans to Americans.

To the last point a word more. It has been discussed even in the German Press that Americans, with whose politics Germans were in agreement, had declared that we Germans were mistaken if we thought that none in America is any longer convinced of German guilt for the war.

In Germany, the conviction is certainly supreme, the world has disillusioned itself of the belief in the German origin of the war which has been propagated with the help of lies. That is true of Europe — not only among the intellectuals. If the contrary is found, it is hypocritical untruth, spread by professional or business interests. If it were otherwise in America, it should surprise us.

It must be admitted that the discussion of the origin of the war, the negation of the war guilt by the official, governmental side in Germany with diplomatic caution, an academic flight and a generalisation and indifference can set people wondering. It has created in Germany also much surprise, vexation and contradiction.

It cannot be unknown in U.S.A. that private, patriotic circles in Germany have done more to elucidate the war guilt question and still do, so that not more can be done nor is necessary. These circles are ready to supply the American people with all material at their disposal.

It can be proved that 99% of the German population in 1914 had no idea of the nearness and magnitude of the war danger, and therefore could not have prepared for the war either.

It can also be proved that the official quarters in the Government who, of course, knew something but not much of the threatening danger of war realised in darkest mood and expectation, in part, the end of the war hopelessly, and the supremacy of the overpowering, gigantic opponents. Naturally they did every preparation for the defence of the country, but they were never intended for active, aggressive and conquering purposes. Always campaign against campaign; to repel, to defend and to save the threatening and intended downfall. Unfortunately, German diplomats made the mistake of having put to their account the responsibility for the outbreak of war.

It can further be proved that on the opposite side, there was absolute certainty of winning the war — for the Entente, depending only on the Russian hords to overrun Germany, never for a moment doubted victory. It can also be proved that years before the war, there were closed complete agreements among the Entente and they provided definite details for the division of Germany after it should be conquered, and the members of the Entente fixed details how the German colonies should be divided.

There are so much materials to prove all that, should the American people go through them as impartial judges, they would surely acquit Germans of all responsibility for the War — although Germany is pretendend to be first in responsibility.

There is no want of proofs but of the knowledge of them. We shall place them at the disposal of the American public. If it will go through them, the monstrosity, that is alleged about the Germans' sole responsibility for the war and therefore must bear the penalty for the crime which it never did, will disappear finally.

Then, the peoples of the world will no longer look down upon the Germans as morally low, they will see the injustice of their views as evidenced by their judgment and then alone they will lay the foundations for a real international peace and goodwill. Then alone there will be real peace and harmony. It will then be possible to create a real world and manhood which is moral, true and honest, against this hollowness and appearance in which we are vegetating in the world.

America and American people alone can materialise it. Americans must introduce it. They are morally bound to do so owing to their responsibility in the Armistice.

To bring this matter to the heart of the whole American people is the aim of this letter. Every proof necessary as basis for the required change of heart and mind is at its disposal.

And now, what can America do to bring peace, rest and order in Europe and the world? What must it do to return to Germany and the world the trust in American honor and honesty?

On this question also, much, very much has been written in Germany which is useful.

It may be permitted to recapitulate the most salient, leading to quick decision and practical results.

We purposely avoid here what may chiefly lead to extended discussion, such as the annexation of territories forcibly effected. On this question, Point 13 of Wilson's 14 demands the linguistically mixed territories of Posen and West Prussia if accorded the referendum and choice would certainly come back to us. In that case, Poland will probably be forced to seek its entrance to the sea on Lithuanian territory. It is however advisable to wait for the discussion of this question till the Americans are prepared to return to general views upon which alone the damages unjustly done in point of annexation of territory can be repaired with other injustices.

In Alsace-Lorraine alone the possibility of Referendum is still there. The right to it pronounced in the Peace Treaty has been suppressed with violence. It can be still restored. Locarno Treaty does not change the conditions, Germany has given up rights over Alsace-Lorraine. But the Alsace-Lorraine

people have not given up their rights to Referendum as to whether they should join Germany or become autonomous.

Similarly the case of South Tirol, Sudetic Germany and the annexed territory of Hungary is clear. By virtue of the Peace Treaty, these people have a right to referendum to decide whether they will recognise the newly imposed authority. The referendum will decide the legality of their subjection and allegiance. Perhaps these territories will appeal one day to the League of Nations with their demands.

However important it is to American people to know that the present territorial arrangements have nothing in common with justice but are enforced by violence only, we shall leave these questions aside today. Time is pressing. The conference is sitting. Its specified object is to settle the Reparation question, and it is there that America can help us quickly, fundamentally and for all time. How? Through financial accomodation, be it through decree, be it as a present, a material gift by which America will clear off its moral obligation.

The matter is thus: The Entente countries are of opinion that should America show friendship to Germany, it is also bound to cancel their debts to America. In America the people are opposed to this because the former Associates of America, will use that sum for armaments against America herself. It is a fact that Germany pays yearly more to the Entente than these pay America.

The way to show friendship to Germany without helping the Entente to increase their armaments against America would be, America takes upon herself the payments made now by Germany to the Entente countries. Further, the limit of German payment be set upon a reasonable basis of German capacities. What excess has to be paid by Germany to America over the debts of these countries to America, probably some to France and Belgium, will be lent by America to Germany, so that Germany will free itself of its responsibilities at once. When Germany thus becomes the sole debtor to America, America can strike off these loans. Germany remains debtor to America, only for the cash lent her to pay off her obligations to France and Belgium only.

Thus alone the problem can be solved, not in any other way. Every other resolution is dangerous to Germany and is against American interests, e. g. if Germany undertook to pay the war debt via Entente countries. Only when Germany establishes direct footing with America, can Germans be really freed, not if Entente remains debtor to U.S.A. and Germany pays them.

The Entente is not interested in loosening their grip over Germany. On the contrary. They will find ways and means to avoid the American proposal: Free Germany from payments and then we shall present you your payments.

In such a case, either Americans who do not want to nor dare help the Entente to increase armaments against themselves, or Germany will have gained any advantage.

America must take the whole matter in her hands, arrange payments directly between her and Germany and then leave Germany free.

Thus must America decide, decree; she has the power to do so. She must also be willing. The money which she will sacrifice is saved by the reduced armaments that will follow.

A sum within German possibilities for payment must be calculated moderately, and nothing should be laid in the way of developing Germany to freedom and independence. It is understood that after this determination of financial demands, occupation, checks etc. should be abolished giving us back our sovereignty and independence. America must solemnly bind itself, when we undertake the debts upon ourselves, to leave us free to ourselves. Our promise to pay is legally binding only upon this condition.

Surely, it is somewhat very much which we appeal to America for. Perhaps no such demands were ever made by one people to another. Yet it is not so great in our estimation as that demanded before and made in the name of the Versailles treaty. What is the question now? It is about a sum of money which cannot be great for a rich country that America is, but whose sacrifice will make a great impression upon the world, giving extraordinary impetus to the future of the world. America stands at the parting of ways. It

carries the responsibility alone for the future of her own and all peoples.

If America fulfilled our wishes, then Versailles will go down to the bottom and will be forgotten in oblivion. Good-will and peace will cover up the past as was expected, at that time, of America, the protector of justice, the arbiter of the world for the healing of Mankind and for the blessing of Humanity. If America does not satisfy our desires, we must then point as warning to the eternal truth of the words: —

History of the world is the court of the world.

P. Schultze, Pastor, Putbus on Rügen.